

Sample Testimony for Community College Staff

Senator Slap, Representative Elliott, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee,

My name is Carmen Yiamouyiannis and I have been teaching Biology at Capital Community College for 24 years.

I am here today to testify in support of HB 5300, *An Act Requiring Legislative Approval For the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the Consolidation of the Regional-Technical Colleges*. This bill provides necessary legislative oversight of any merger within the CSCU System, a power that the Legislature used to hold. Oversight is needed. Let me give you a few examples of shared services fiascos. First, I believe shared services could work, to some extent. For instance, if CT community college students share a common platform for student and financial services, they can seamlessly register for a class at one college and another class at another community college. Or shared services for community college libraries could allow for more resources for the students at less cost. Unfortunately, for many students and staff, shared services is cumbersome, inflexible and negatively impacts student success.

Example 1. Hiring of another lab technician at Capital CC. In Oct 2020, we had 1 of our 2 lab techs retire and we still haven't hired anyone else. About half of the biology labs are still online (!), and my request to have more in-person labs for this semester was met with resistance because we don't have enough lab tech support and it takes so long now (months and months) to hire someone. We have lost the flexibility to hire even part time help. Right now, if something happened to our overworked lab technician, even in the short term, our biology, chemistry, and physics labs at CCC would come to a screeching halt. We need the ability to pivot and hire short term or full-time lab help to meet the needs of our students. Before the pandemic, CCC offered about 50 labs/week (12 completely different preps/week) and many of the classes are taught by adjunct instructors which makes our college even more reliant on lab tech support. We had two FT lab technicians who worked to set up and dismantle labs, order material, maintain equipment, dispose of chemical waste properly, etc. We needed more lab tech help for the evenings and weekend classes but were told "it is not in the budget".

Example 2. We have had **one** full-time chemist for the past 5 + years and have offered about 20 chemistry classes/semester. We have been asking to hire another chemist for years and we are told "it is not in the budget". Now our one full-time chemist is retiring in June.

However.....there seems to be plenty of money to hire multiple layers of administration.

System officials first discussed the consolidation as a plan to save. When there was pushback, then and only then did they begin to say that it would also help students. However, any positive benefits from the consolidation, such as seamless transfer, can be done without merging the twelve colleges. This is nothing but a restructuring that adds many new administrators while cutting staff that works directly with students.

Help protect the Community Colleges. The students who attend are overwhelmingly from Connecticut and will stay in Connecticut to live and work. Community College students are majority black and brown, working-class students. Real equity would be giving these students every opportunity to succeed by investing more in their education, not trying to save money by cutting the staff and resources that directly serve them.

Lastly, there are many more faculty and staff that would like to testify but feel intimidated and therefore have chosen to not share their personal stories of how the consolidation has, so far, been the complete opposite of Student's First.

Thank you.